



The newsletter of
Presbyterian Elders In Prayer

PRAYERPOWER

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James 5:14-15

February-April 2010

From the Executive Director:

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you.” Isaiah 60:1-2

Surely, we live in a time when darkness is obvious and often overpowering. Ugliness, violence, cruelty, vengeance, cynicism, unfaithfulness expand daily...and mercy, love, faith, kindness, hope, and obedience seem to shrink daily. We see this happen in our nation, among other nations, in our churches and in our denominations...even in our neighborhoods and families. And yet...and yet. Our God speaks in times of darkness. Our God is speaking to us today. Our God says to us, His children, ***“Arise, shine, for your light has come...yet there is thick darkness covering the earth (and the nation, and the church, and even our homes), but the Lord rises upon you and His glory appears over you.”*** The words are as encouraging to us as they were to God’s people when Isaiah proclaimed them so long ago.

The light that shines in us and through us is not our own...we cannot create it with our good intentions. The light comes from the presence of Jesus Christ living within us and among us. Even in thickest darkness, His light will shine! As we read in John’s gospel: ***“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”***

We cannot make the light shine, it is not ours to control. But we can invite our Savior to pour out more of His light on us, in us, and through us by drawing ever closer to Him in prayer. As elders and leaders in the church, we’ve made a commitment to a life of prayer and service for the church of Jesus Christ. How are we doing with that commitment? Are we obedient, or have we simply given in to groaning about the darkness?

The light of our Lord shines brightly when we are on our knees in prayer, and then come to our feet in glad obedience. The need is so great right now. Will you, as one who has made the time to read PEP newsletters, go to your knees and then to your feet in faithfulness and obedience to Christ? The light of Christ needs to shine over our local congregations, our presbyteries, and our General Assembly as it meets this year. The light of Christ needs to shine on our confused, divided, and all-too-secular nation. We need the light of Christ to shine brightly over our broken, sin-sick world. Will you choose this day, and every day, to be obedient? Will you become a servant who prays every day, for at least 5

minutes, for the whole church? Will you be obedient to Christ, honoring Him and Him alone as your Lord and Savior?

This is the time to step up and pray and serve as the disciples He has called us to become. Jesus provides the light...may we provide the willing, faithful hearts. I commend to you the article on "Peace", written by long-time PEP board member and former Executive Director Merrilyn Slack-Schinkel. Read it carefully. Read it again. And let the Holy Spirit shine...

In Christ's service,

Melany Hamilton
Executive Director of PEP

PEP PREPARES FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY – In just six months the meeting of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA will convene in Minneapolis, Minnesota. PEP will have a praying presence there. In order to keep costs in line, this year PEP will be sharing exhibit hall space with another group: Literacy and Evangelism International. A description of this group and its ministry is provided below. We look forward to sharing prayer and fellowship as well as booth space with LEI. We will have some PEP board members in the booth, ready to pray with commissioners, observers, and other visitors. We will also have some helpful resources for prayer. We are hoping to have some PEP volunteers who will be available to sit in committee meetings, etc. to be quietly discerning and prayerful. We'd also love to have "prayer walking" volunteers from the beginning to the conclusion of the Assembly. If you'd like to volunteer, or if you have godly friends you'd like to recommend, please get in touch with PEP's Executive Director, Melany Hamilton. Her email and regular mail addresses are:

Hamiltons5@verizon.net — or — 300 Ridge Road, Rochelle, IL, 61068.

Literacy and Evangelism International is a Christian organization that shares the gift of reading by sharing the message of Jesus Christ. LEI has produced basic readers, using the Bible, in 213 languages, which impact people in 67 countries. You can read more about this highly respected ministry by going to their website: www.literacyevangelism.org

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE NEXT PEP NEWSLETTER.....

The heart of the May-July newsletter will be a special Prayer Guide for the Forty Days Prior to General Assembly. It will also provide a Ten-Day Prayer Guide for the time GA gathers and meets. All of the prayers will be based on Scripture, and are to be prayed in Jesus' name. We hope that our readers will make copies of the Prayer Guide to share with their congregations and friends. The prayer guides will be posted on our website as well. We know that every meeting of the General Assembly brings both potential for good for the church and potential for harm. The PEP board does not seek to tell people how to vote...but we most definitely seek to encourage fervent, Spirit-led prayer for the commissioners, the work of the committees, and the church as a whole. We work to encourage faithfulness to Jesus Christ, who is and always will be our Lord and Savior. We believe prayer is powerful...as it draws us into a deeper, more authentic relationship with Christ. In prayer, we can discern His will. In prayer, we are given strength to obey Christ. Our Prayer Guides are simply a tool to help us pray for the whole church at a particularly crucial time. We will offer those Prayer Guides with hope and humility. Please use them and share them as the Holy Spirit leads.

PEACE
(A Reflection by Rev. Marilyn Slack-Schinkel)

I have a friend who ends all conversations, spoken or written, with the word, "Peace". It is her concluding remark; her desire for all; her benediction. As I have pondered this over the years, my conclusion is that peace is not possible apart from purity.

From God's Word we hear: ***"There is no peace to the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22; 57:21). "The Lord shall reward the doer of evil according his wickedness" (II Samuel 3:39).*** Jesus, the now King of Peace, is also Lord of the Judgment and eternity. Wisdom would dictate purity.

Peace! Peace! We wish each other at Christmas. Peace on earth! Good will! But it is mockery to say peace to wickedness, to transgression, to corruption, to sin. There can be no blessing for these, and God will not be mocked. Whatever we sow we will reap (Galatians 6:7). On the television news, we can see evil go seemingly unpunished in our government, in our neighborhood, in the world. But it isn't over until the Lord executes judgment. And as to us in the Church, the merciful Lord Jesus says: ***"Judgment begins at the house of God" (I Peter 4:17); and "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11).***

Lent and Easter are about mercy, deliverance, repentance and salvation. Because of His mercy, what we cannot do for ourselves, the Loving Lord did for us. Embracing His cross, we are delivered from our wickedness, given the opportunity to turn around and head back to God, and be saved from eternal consequences of sin. Getting personal, you are offered an intimate relationship with the One who cast the stars across the heavens by speaking, and who knit you together in your mother's womb.

During Lent, some Christians give up meat or chocolate. A better plan would be to live out Isaiah 58:6-14...not just read it, but live it out. Easter is about new life, but there is no new life while embracing old sin. God will not be mocked, especially in the House of God.

There was a time, as Jesus hung on the cross, that entrenched evil and wickedness appeared to win. But, then came the glorious, victorious rising of the living Jesus. In like manner, there will come a time when darkest evil will wage war with God's people, and will be allowed to win. Before the ultimate victory of Revelation 15:2, is the apparent forsaking and defeat of Revelation 13:7.

Whatever the devastating events in the world, and however dark things may appear to be, our eyes are to be upon the Lord of glory. We, like those before us, have a choice of whom or what we will serve. If you will hear His voice, harden not your heart. Though we may be accustomed to many comforts, which can be taken for granted, or to which we may feel entitled, we might consider Isaiah 58, and choose affliction with the people of God, rather than enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. For though there can be pleasure in sin for awhile, the season does come to an end, and then comes the judgment.

Because Christ died for our sins, we can have purity. We can confess, we can be forgiven, and then, restored. Our evil can be covered with Christ's blood, and ultimately, we can be raised perfect. Our short life of trials and failures; good accomplishments, and vain efforts; all the good and bad of who we are and what we have done, can be forever eclipsed by the Lord's gracious, wondrous, and wonderful eternity. This is His gift of love. This is very good news. Share it! Hallelujah, and Peace!

AN APPEAL ON PEP'S BEHALF:

The members of the PEP board are deeply grateful for the financial support you have given us, including this year. We are very careful to be wise stewards. As we prepare materials for the booth at General Assembly, and as we make plans to send a few PEP veterans to work at the booth and pray over the Assembly area, we will need extra help financially. We are well aware of the financial difficulties of these times...but we are also well aware of the needs of the church, especially spiritual needs. Please help us as you are able and the Spirit leads. Contributions can be sent to our Treasurer, Mr. Fred Schinkel, at 5100 159th Terrace, Overland Park, KS 66085. Thank you!

And don't forget that you can receive this newsletter by email. Go to our website, www.presbypay.org, and follow the instructions. Or, send an email to Melany Hamilton at hamiltons5@verizon.net. She'll make sure your name is added to the email list.

SPECIAL PRAYERS DURING THIS PARTICULAR SEASON

Please pray daily for the people of Haiti, and for all those people around the world who are going to Haiti to help provide medical care, food, water and other basic supplies needed; as well as rebuilding of homes and infrastructure. In this time of tragedy, may the light of Christ shine through the generosity and courage of His people.

Give prayers of thanks for the life and eternal life of pastor, missionary, and former director of Presbyterian Frontier Ministries, Harold Kurtz. Harold entered heaven on December 18, 2009 and living 85 years of faithful and joyful service to Jesus Christ. A passionate evangelist, Harold helped to bring the gospel to places on earth that most of us have never heard of...we rejoice that he has now heard those beautiful words spoken to him: Well done, good and faithful servant.

In the coming days committee assignments will be made for the various committees of General Assembly. Also, plans will be made for the worship services and other special gatherings. These plans and assignments are crucial to the spiritual health of the General Assembly meeting. We pray that wisdom from the Holy Spirit will prevail over church politics and agendas. May those who are most faithful and discerning be called to serve in key positions.

Prayer Calendar for February - April, 2010
(Prayers inspired by lectionary readings; all prayers are prayed in Jesus' name)

PRAYER GUIDE FOR FEBRUARY, 2010

Feb. 1-6: Read Psalm 29; *"The Lord gives His people strength; the Lord blesses His people with peace"* (Vs. 11) Lord God, we pray that You will give Your strength to Your people—Your church—around the world. And we pray that strength will be blessed with Your peace, the peace that passes understanding...the peace of Jesus Christ. And we pray that strength and peace for our own congregation, for our presbytery, our synod, and our General Assembly.

Feb. 7-13: Read Luke 5:11, *"Don't be afraid,"* Jesus told Simon, *"from now on you'll be catching people!"* (Vs. 10) Jesus, forgive us our fear, especially the fear that has held us back from sharing Your life-changing love. Forgive us for holding back. Forgive our churches for our lack of concern and energy for evangelism. Help us this very week to follow Your lead, and may our trust in You grow ever stronger.

Feb. 14-20: Read Luke 9:28-43; *"This is My Son, the Chosen One; listen to Him!"* (V. 35) Gracious God, how we long to see and hear a glimpse of Your glory. Could it be that we do not see that glory because we do not listen to You? Forgive us for reading or hearing Your Word and letting it go in one ear and out the other. Forgive us for failing to take Your Word seriously when we make those daily ethical decisions we are called to make. We know that attentiveness and obedience will open our eyes to see more of You. Help us to do what we know is right.

Feb. 21-27: Read Romans 10; This is the message of faith that we proclaim: if you confess with your mouth, *"Jesus is Lord,"* and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Lord God, we confess that too often there has been a disconnect between our mouths and our hearts. Even in our congregations, and in our denomination, there has been a disconnect between our hearts and mouths. Forgive us, Lord. May our hearts be so filled with faith in Jesus Christ that our mouths will overflow with words of gospel truth...inside and outside of the church. We ask this not for ourselves alone, but the church and for Your kingdom.

Feb. 28-March 6: Read Luke 13:31-35; *"...I will complete My work."* Jesus, we spend much of our times worrying about our work, and how we will get it all done. Help us to remember Your perfect work of sacrifice leading to our salvation. And help us to remember that You are always working through Your Holy Spirit. Lord, complete Your work in us...in ourselves, our families, our congregations, our presbyteries, our synods, our denomination, other church families around the world. This week we pray for YOUR work to be done, and we ask for the wisdom and strength to join You where You are working.

PRAYER GUIDE FOR MARCH, 2010

March 7-13: Read Luke 13:1-9; *"I tell you, unless you repent, you will all perish as well."* (Vs. 5) Jesus, You have called us to a lifetime of repentance. Too often we are so focused on the sins of others that we do not confess and repent of our own sins. Too often (even now?) our lives are barren...there is no sign of our discipleship. Forgive us, Lord. We long for fruitful, Spirit-led lives. Tender our hearts and show us the way.

March 14-20: Read Luke 15: *"I tell you, in the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who repents."* (Vs. 10) What is wrong with us, God? We can act so religious, yet when someone we know receives salvation by faith through grace in Jesus Christ, and rejoices, we often feel uncomfortable, even embarrassed. We even feel this way about ourselves when we have been through a "lost" period in life. Why do we doubt Your love, Your mercy, Your power to change lives? Hear our prayers as we pray for those who are lost...and those so recently found, and for ourselves.

March 21-27: : Read John 12:1-8; *"Mary took a pound of fragrant oil—pure and expensive nard—anoined Jesus' feet, and wiped His feet with her hair. So the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil."* (Vs. 3) Jesus, Your sacrifice was so huge...help us to fall to our knees as we are called to prayerfully make sacrifices for You. And may our prayers, our worship, and obedient discipleship produce a fragrance that will touch the hearts of many others, and always bring glory to You.

March 28-April 3: Read Luke 19:28-40; *"If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying this donkey?' say this: 'The Lord needs it.'" (V. 31)* Our Savior, we usually offer a long list of OUR needs in our times of prayer. Today, and every day this week, we humbly ask, "What do You need of me? What do You need of this church? What do we have that could be used in powerful ways in Your service?" Help us to listen carefully for Your answer, and to respond quickly and obediently.

PRAYER GUIDE FOR APRIL, 2010

April 4-10: Read Luke 24; *"He is not here, but He has been resurrected!" (V. 5)* Our hearts leap with joy at the angels' message. Jesus, You are not in a tomb...You are alive, forever! Fill our hearts, fill our families, fill Your churches with Your strong, living presence this day and this week. Then help us to live forever with this truth: we are not practicing a "dead religion". We live and serve our Risen Savior. May we proclaim Your resurrection without hesitation or shame.

April 11-17: Read John 20; Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, *"I have seen the Lord!" And she told them what He had said to her."* (v. 18) Jesus, we ask You to remind us daily that not only do unbelievers need to hear the Good News, but so do Your disciples. Even Your closest followers can become confused, discouraged, and doubtful. Give to each one of us the discernment and courage we need to speak a word of joyful truth to a pastor, an elder, a deacon...someone in leadership in Your church.

April 18-24: Read John 21; *"Come, and have breakfast."* (V. 12) Jesus, it sounds so simple, Your invitation to "come and have breakfast." And yet, we do not often hear Your invitation to closer, more intimate fellowship in the midst of ordinary events of life...eating, working, sharing time with our friends. Anoint our ears to hear You speak to us early in the morning, and throughout the day...no matter where we are or what we are doing. And when we hear, show us how to respond.

April 25-30: Read John 10:22-30 *"My sheep hear My voice, I know them, and they follow Me."* (V. 27) Lord God, in the course of any given day we hear many voices. May we always be ready to hear Your voice...may we always recognize it...and may we be ever ready to follow Your lead. We long to follow You faithfully, even within the work of our congregations and our presbyteries. We are Yours, we are gladly Yours, and we thank You today and forever for the gift of abundant and eternal life.